

## 6. Selfspheres as Worlds

A topic—like others—that the world has not asked me to discuss, but which I will discuss nonetheless, because I too am the world, and the world wants to express itself regardless of what it thinks is necessary, is the relationship between subjectivities. But since I aim to keep the greatest possible distance from the philosophical ocean of discourse, with its vast depths containing conceptual elaborations that are, in their own ways, both true and false, I will translate subjectivity into my own terms, calling it in my specific language: selfsphere.

Escaping linguistic constraints by forging neologisms can be useful, especially when one intends to blur the boundaries between strictly rational thought and poetic imagination.

In times when dishonesty is no longer seen as wrong and creativity can be reduced to feeding a set of instructions into an “artificial intelligence” and “tweaking” the results so they look analog (or better yet, feeding them to another “artificial intelligence” to have them “humanized”), being honest, thorough, and original becomes an intimate pact with oneself. We are crossing a true negative moral singularity.

Is there something wrong with using artificial intelligence to produce supposedly personal thoughts? For some, there is no longer any conflict. For others—for us—there still is. Hence, here is yet another proof of my commitment to myself and to you.

The metaphorization of the self as a three-dimensional image, such as a sphere, also conveys in communication the necessity of enclosure. At the same time, it raises other fundamental problems regarding the self as a receiving center from an undefined—perhaps inexplicable—point at the center of that sphere; a center that must be understood as projector as well as receptor.

The way we metaphorize abstractions enables us to manipulate them. The verb manipulate, when used in reference to abstractions, clearly feels equivocal, odd. On the other hand, it is difficult—given our current linguistic conditions—to find a proper substitute. Both handle and work with, when referring to abstractions, carry the same sensation (“carry the sensation”) of falling short. Suddenly, a terrible truth is revealed to us—almost as terrible as the certainty that one day death will reach us, and that day could very well be today. And that terrible truth is that, in order to express complex ideas, we must constantly resort to inexact and ambiguous terms; that is, to non-complex expressions. If you don’t believe me, just consider that phrase falling short or the revelation before our eyes. If we stopped constantly to examine those little failures, we wouldn’t be able to speak of anything except language itself or present objects.

## Being and Selfsphere. The Metaphor of Worlds

The core of the self as the center of a sphere—something one might visualize as a plasma lamp—is a fascinating and intrinsically strange idea, as it projects an image of the infinite that quickly diffuses into personal existence, creating something we might call a black hole in the imagination. Popular creativity, not by chance, has coined the well-known saying “every head is a world,” which is an excellent approximation of the central idea of this essay. Mentality, seen as a planet—a world—suggests the notion of habitability conditions: a particular atmospheric composition, a unique topography, and peculiar chemistry.

I believe it is futile to attempt a total separation between the concepts of being and selfsphere, and to that list of clumsy distinctions we could add others, such as mentality, thought, spirit, or soul. Each introduces a different connotation, but all refer to the same reality I aim to point to: that peculiar thing we call the self.

In a previous essay, I even mentioned a neighboring term: background theory, which suits an epistemological design based on attribution particularly well.

All of this is very nice—and it’s a beautiful thing to choose words as if walking through a forest full of trees, needing only to reach out indifferently and pluck the desired fruit.

Suddenly, two worlds collide. Two people begin to know each other, and their internal dynamics intersect, align, compare. In dialogue, selfspheres come into communion, and a series of crucial rejections and compatibilities occur.

Clearly, planets cannot investigate one another. As far as we know, only one planet can investigate others through its inhabitants. Inhabitants who are, in fact, the planet itself. But let us imagine, for a moment, that planets could truly engage in dialogue with each other, comparing themselves.

Each selfsphere contains an *imago mundi*, an image of the world sustained by interests and affectivity. We do not wish for another selfsphere to show us that our *imago mundi* is defective, because that would imply we have failed to draw that *imago mundi* properly within ourselves. For instance, imagine an initial conversation between someone deeply committed to their religious beliefs and another person who not only does not share that religion, but professes no faith at all—and, in fact, does not even believe in God. In that contrast, the believer's selfsphere will understand that, tacitly, they are being called ignorant and superstitious. Meanwhile, the other will think—through this mirror effect—that they are seen as poor in spirit and distant from the Truth. Such contrast can always occur when one of these mountains in a selfsphere's landscape appears as the opposite of a mountain in another.

One could still develop connections between each geographical feature and metaphorical meanings associated with them. I have done so with the mountain, since the element mountain is naturally perceived as something imposing, gigantic, evident. But the characteristics transferred from the metaphorical realm to the contents of a selfsphere are firmly tied to only a few specific properties significant to the observer: size (grandeur or smallness), prominence or depth, physical and temporal stability, liquidity, aridity, volatility, and habitability.

As for habitability or uninhabitability, it would not be difficult to admit that such a property is useful for characterizing the entire selfsphere—if we conceptualize the selfsphere itself as an environment.

Thus, we begin to see revealed before us mountains of certainty, valleys of doubt, caves of secrets, rivers of desire, ravines of impulse destined to dry up, deserts of disenchantment, devoid of any possibility of life, oceans of ignorance... Jungles of overwhelming exuberance, most remote islands that almost no one can explore without succumbing in the attempt... perhaps inhabited by hostile aborigines.

Clearly, as with the river and its flow, the inclusion of temporality allows us to move from mere disposition to dynamics; that is, from structure to system. Then, we can also observe storms of passion and earthquakes of panic.

### **Selfsphere and Domination**

And now comes the test. How nerve-racking! Selfsphere A and Selfsphere B enter the room of contrastation. I have already explained that relationships between people (and also between entities not necessarily personal) are radically asymmetrical in terms of power distribution. And since people are selfspheres, we can see the relationship between them as an abstract representation of the relationship between persons.

Indeed, even at the moment of entering the contrastation test, before any exchange occurs, we already have an inviting selfsphere and an invited one. The one who invites—the inviter—will inevitably be situated in a position of initial inferiority. The invited one, on the other hand, will possess the superiority of being able to choose, and do so with certainty, based on the expressed will of the inviter.

Now let us suppose that Selfsphere A enters the contrastation as a candidate for dominated, by being the inviter; and Selfsphere B enters as a candidate for dominant, by being invited. When the topographies begin to contrast, and the imago mundi are compared, one selfsphere will tend to yield, and the other to impose itself.

The process is not simple: first, Selfsphere A reveals an aspect of its imago mundi (although Selfsphere B could reveal theirs first); then, within the imago mundi of Selfsphere B, an image-value appears that

corresponds to Selfsphere A and its imago mundi. If there is no agreement between what B has understood to be drawn in A's imago mundi and B's own, Selfsphere B may move toward conflict (a posture decisively reserved for dominants), or it may submit. It may even debate from a place of insecurity, just to make its presence felt and demonstrate that it has character.

Selfsphere A, perhaps the inviter, receives the blow and might decide not to respond—because it extended the invitation, and did so for a reason. Thus, it must submit in order to remain in the game, but strictly speaking, it lost before it began.

Another idea that follows logically from this is that the one who speaks much exposes themselves to the analysis of others. Therefore, silence can be a healthy strategy—especially when we are not entirely sure of the goodwill our listeners will apply in trying to understand what we say.

On the other hand, it is evident that silence leaves room for idealization. But in my opinion, it is nonetheless a cowardice and a baseness to play with silence. Those who are sure of themselves do not fear disagreement and conflict, even if they must end their days alone.

### **Affiliations, Affinities: It's Not You, It's Me**

The mirror effect can be a way of feeding our self-esteem. If the image of the world another person reflects back to us aligns with our own drawing, we see that our drawing was not wrong. And it is not difference that pleases us—despite what some may claim. The soft philosophy that praises disagreement is nothing but a variation of a way of being in the world drenched in hypocrisy and diplomatic frivolity.

We enjoy being confirmed in our imago mundi because, in parallel, we are being confirmed in our ability to draw it within our selfsphere. The accounts balance, they match. A natural joy emerges—an inexplicable being-well, a primitive and innocent happiness, like that of schoolchildren who, after solving a math problem, exclaim: "Mine came out the same!"

Thus, in moments of true coincidence, we are actually talking to ourselves through the other. We should imagine two complex drawings printed on a thin, translucent sheet of tracing paper, and in some abstract space—let's say, on an imaginary table—they come together, one superimposed on the other. The chances of perfect alignment are nearly nonexistent. The more complex each drawing is, the lower the probability of coincidence.

But soon we discover that there are parts, sectors of overlap. Later, we may use the leftovers to affirm our individuality, but the truth is that, essentially, we greatly enjoy talking to ourselves through others.

It would be helpful to start outlining the general topographies. I've already spoken of mountains, and it is precisely mountains and deep valleys that best illustrate—through imagery—non-negotiable convictions. And these convictions are not divorced from certain weaknesses that dwell in every selfsphere as a fundamental driving force.

Fear of loneliness, fear of death, the need for affection, for company, for sexual exchange, for economic sustainability—all of this is nothing but our ontological vulnerability expressing itself. Since human beings do not possess an exoskeleton like other species, we are exposed to the attacks of the environment. And that physical fragility is also our mental fragility.

And how beautiful it is to subjugate someone with the weapon of agreement! How genuine, how tangible becomes the power that emerges from an act that is paradoxically both collective and individual! A giant devours us, and we then metamorphose into one of its mighty executing arms.

### **The Problem of the Blind Barrel**

There is no doubt that explaining a topology within the imago mundi as a key feature of the selfsphere seems tempting—even poetic—and could offer a very interesting tool for understanding compatibility or rejection between selfspheres.

Of course, we are already intuitively familiar with these phenomena. No one needs to construct a theoretical discourse to make us see that certain political or religious positions (and even much less refined ones, such as those related to sports teams) are irreconcilable. But it is worth exploring further the possibilities of such metaphorization.

Certainly, there are people so jealous of their imago mundi that they will never cease to exercise dominion through a sustained refusal to reformulate—to redraw—their image. These are the people who, in the test of contrastation, leave no room for validation of another's opinion. They are nothing more than small tyrants, who force their interlocutor to accept, to conflict, or to flee.

We must also always be wary—which adds another layer of complexity to the matter—of those who too easily accept reformulations of their imago. Either they lack personality (which is surely one of the worst defects a human being can have), or they don't care because the issue is irrelevant to them, or they are flattering us.

But setting aside all these pleasant things, I'd like to briefly refer to another I have called "the problem of the blind barrel," once again seeking, through metaphor, a way to give form to thought. This time, pointing more directly to the matrix: "environment of existence."

Let's imagine I have a fish in a fishbowl. I walk with the fishbowl under my arm and suddenly I find myself facing a person standing next to a barrel. The barrel is made of wood and is completely sealed, such that I cannot know what is inside—if there is anything at all inside. For the purpose of our analogy, let's imagine we call "something" even the empty void.

This barrel has a small opening at the top—a hole no more than three or four centimeters wide—which is just enough for my fish to fit through, but not wide enough to see inside. Even if I try repeatedly, I cannot know what's in there. It is a blind barrel.

I not only care for my little fish and want to protect it, but I am truly concerned about what might happen to it. Then I am invited by the owner of the barrel to place my fish inside it. I hesitate, because I believe anything could be inside: soil, boiling water, saltwater, milk, wine, vinegar... the barrel could even be empty.

There are so many possible contents—and so many of them would kill my fish—that I don't know whether it would be a good idea to take the risk of placing it inside.

Is the barrel the environment in which we decide to place an idea when we share it with another person? That idea can be immediately attacked, or it may not find the right place to survive. Of course, with a bit of luck, it is possible that there is water inside the barrel with the correct salinity and temperature.

This is how the selfspheres work. One must understand that when two selfspheres come into contrast, a series of defenses are activated. When someone raises them to allow a new thought to exist within them, the act itself constitutes a first display of goodwill. This is why communication that gives all the advantages to those who may attack ideas (for instance, from anonymity, as happens on the internet) without suffering consequences is a risk for the person who decides to expose themselves. But, with a fatal mathematical certainty, the owner of the little fish is taught a total truth: we must lose interest in the well-being of the poor animal, which is nothing more than a hostage. Sometimes it will survive, but many other times it will die. And when it dies, we must accept that death, turn our backs on the owner of the barrel, and continue our walk.

### **Paranoia of the Defect in the Selfsphere**

It is natural for us to be plagued by a serious doubt: am I speaking through a failed drawing? That is, if I don't have a reliable way to contrast my imago mundi because I can only do so with other selfspheres

and with rudimentary, partial images: am I not wrong when I release my little fish into the wind? It's a legitimate doubt. Perhaps there are defects in my selfsphere and when I try the contrast, those defects inevitably cause my creation of more imago mundi to be distorted from my point of view.

This simple yet profound distrust, which generates discomfort, is also the origin of the obsession with academic documentation. That is, the standardized process in which constant references must be made to previous authors who, in their own way and in different contexts, have glossed ideas that the author understands might serve as antecedents to their own. And also to authors who have been recognized, and therefore respected, who will serve as guarantors for the particular author. In this way, the author ensures that, on one hand, no one will accuse them of being ignorant by repeating previously formulated ideas; and on the other, that no one will dare to judge them for an error. Of course, viewed as a phenomenon of selfsphere dynamics, what the author does by citing others is to sketch necessary information into the selfsphere of their readers to thus protect their discourse. And also, of course, to cloak their own image with a layer of immunity derived from the power of undeniable data. Data that is not always relevant.

An intelligent person is not one who is capable of handling many data points and drawing conclusions from them. An intelligent person is one who manages to reduce reality to rational formulas, even though they may be unaware of many of the available data. The beauty of reason does not depend on the accumulation of supporting data but on the predictive capacity and elegance of the construction.

### **Ideology as a Recurrent Structure**

To harmonize with other selfspheres, weak entities cling to a cliché. Ideology, defined as a conditioning of discourse by repeated premises, makes communication easier.

Indeed, it is about immediately recognizing a singular topology and being able to "internavigate" without stumbling. The intellectually weaker people are the most prone to these kinds of aberrations.

But ideology is nothing more than a recurrent system that the awakened intellect will formalize in no more than a minute. The contrast determined by social factors is ideology, and it shows the most vile aspects of human nature when it combines not only a refusal to reason autonomously but an exercise of power, a domain based on numbers and blindness.

From my point of view, a fervent liberal, a staunch Marxist, a radical feminist, an orthodox Catholic, an Islamic fundamentalist, a fanatic of a sports team, and ultimately anyone who chooses not to think in order to feel protected by the power of a mass that shelters itself behind the fetish of an idea, are all exactly the same. They do not deserve forgiveness or understanding. They deserve nothing.